

## SOCCER

# Academy inclusion a major boost for soccer

YOUNG soccer players from the South West will be given the best possible chance of making it to the top after the sport was recently included as one of the inaugural four at the South West Academy of Sport.

The academy, the first program of its kind in regional Western Australia, was officially launched late last week with a gala function in Bunbury where soccer, football, basketball and hockey were named as the successful appli-



cants. Steve Suttie, a 174-game veteran with South West Phoenix, says the academy is a massive boost to the game in the region.

"Football is booming in the South

West and the inclusion in the academy means elite players will be able to stay at home in the South West and still get top-quality training and education," he said.

Placing football in the academy alongside AFL recognises the huge potential the sport possesses.

South West Academy of Sport board chairman Don Punch said it was heartening to see the planning stages of

such an exciting project head towards the finish line.

"Regional Western Australia has a strong history of producing quality athletes," he said.

"The academy is an outstanding project which will provide increased opportunity for young talents to rise through the ranks and become State, national and international champions."

The academy has been designed so

up and coming athletes can benefit from an elite level of coaching and education without the burden of travel or having to leave their homes to pursue sporting excellence.

The program will be based at Bunbury's South West Sports Centre and scholarships offered to 50 athletes.

The State Government and South West Development Commission have so far committed almost \$250,000 towards the program.